

## Mock Elections Overview

### Materials required

- ✓ Paper mock ballots – one per student
- ✓ Folders and envelopes
- ✓ Voter education materials (downloadable versions available on the Mock Election Portal)
- ✓ Pens – one per student
- ✓ Large paper easel and markers, or chalk board and chalk
- ✓ Cardboard ballot boxes
- ✓ “I voted” stickers – one per student

### Preparing voting packets and setting up the room

- A. About one-third of the class will receive mock “absentee voting” ballots. Another third will receive mock “early voting” ballots, and the remaining third will receive mock “Election Day voting” ballots. Place mock ballots inside of manila envelopes to simulate voting by mail and label the envelopes “absentee voting.” The remaining mock ballots can be placed in manila folders labeled either “early voting” or “Election Day voting.” Distribute a mix of “absentee voting,” “early voting,” and “Election Day voting” ballot packets, either by placing a mock ballot packet under each student’s seat prior to their arrival, or volunteer “poll workers” may hand each student a ballot packet once they are seated. Don’t forget to include voter education materials in each packet!
- B. Instruct teachers to assist students selected as “poll workers” by overseeing ballot collection and counting.
- C. Set up a “counting table” as a poll worker station for the counting and tallying of votes.

### Mock Election Guide

The following section provides instructions to the facilitator on running a mock election for students.

- 1. Provide an overview of the mock election:** Provide overview and instructions for the mock election.
  - a. First, students will volunteer to serve in the following roles:
    - Secretary of State
    - Local clerk
    - Two poll workers (ballot gatherers)
    - Two poll workers (ballot counters)
    - Two election observers
  - b. A primary election will be held for students to decide what category the election will be about, and to select candidates to vote for.
  - c. A general election will be held for students to vote on the selected category and candidates and select a winner.
  - d. The ballots will be counted by the volunteer student poll workers. Once ballots have been counted, a winner will be announced.
- 2. Select student volunteers:** Select student volunteers for the following roles. Be sure to tell volunteers that they may still vote in the election.

- a. Secretary of State: Ask students to raise their hand if they would like to volunteer to serve as Secretary of State for the mock election. The Secretary of state is the chief election officer in the state and will assist in overseeing the election and answering “media” questions.
- b. Election clerk: Ask students to raise their hand if they would like to volunteer to serve as an election clerk. Election clerks help oversee local elections and supervise poll workers. They also answer media questions.
- c. Poll workers: Ask four or five students to volunteer to be poll workers for the mock election. Poll workers assist in distributing, collecting, and counting the ballots.
- d. Election observers: Ask two students to volunteer to serve as election observers. Election observers watch the ballot counting process to ensure the election is run properly and transparently.

### **3. Mock Primary Election**

- a. Step 1: Determine the category: Ask the students to shout out a category they would like to hold a vote about and select a category from the student suggestions.
  - i. Examples of categories could be best musical artists, the best snack food, best breakfast cereals, etc.
- b. Step 2: Candidate nominations: Ask students to raise their hands to nominate a candidate to vote for in the selected category. Accept four or five nominations.
  - i. Examples of nominees if the category is best snack food: Cheetos, Dunkaroos, Takis
- c. Step 3: Narrow the field: State the name of each listed candidate. Students may vote once by raising their hand when their candidate’s name is called. Each student can only vote/raise their hand once.
  - i. Determine the top two candidates by who had the most hands raised (a visual estimate of hands is acceptable).
  - ii. Announce the final candidates for the general election.

### **4. Mock General Election**

- a. Step 4: Provide the ballots: Instruct students to look under their seat to find their ballots or instruct volunteer poll workers to distribute the ballots. Each ballot will be labeled one of three categories. Explain the categories to the students. Ask them not to fill out their ballots until you say to do so.
  - i. *Absentee voters* (ballots will be in an envelope) – students in the first few rows or tables will receive these and will vote first for two minutes.
  - ii. *Early voters* (ballots will be in a folder also known as a “secrecy sleeve”) students in the rows/tables after absentee voters will receive these and will also vote first with absentee voters for two minutes.
  - iii. *Election Day voters* (ballots will be in a “secrecy sleeve” folder) – remaining students in rows/tables behind early voters will vote after the two-minute early voting/absentee voting period has passed, on Election Day!

- iv. Instruct volunteer poll workers that once they have voted, they will begin collecting completed ballots in the provided ballot boxes, allowing the student voters to place their ballots in the ballot box.
- b. Step 5: Time to vote: Absentee voters and early voters may begin filling out their ballots first by following the instructions on their ballot. After two minutes, Election Day voters may begin filling out their ballots.
  - i. Instruct students not to put their name on the ballot. Michigan residents have the right to a secret ballot!
  - ii. Instruct students to write the name of their preferred candidate on the provided space.
  - iii. Instruct students that when they are done, to either:
    1. If in rows: pass their ballot to the end of the row, or,
    2. (if grouped in tables) raise their hand.
- c. Step 6: Count the votes: Once ballots are collected, student poll workers will approach a “counting table,” and with help from teachers and facilitators, will remove ballots from the ballot box, and will start counting and tallying them.
  - i. Stacks of ballots will be distributed to the poll workers for dividing and tallying.
  - ii. Each poll worker will write down their totals for each candidate, and teachers/facilitators will assist with adding the totals to determine the winner.
  - iii. Students serving as volunteer election observers will observe the counting but cannot assist in the counting. They will watch to make sure the ballots are sorted and counted correctly and may point out when errors have been made.
- d. Step 7: Answer media questions: While ballots are being counted, the facilitators should ask the student volunteers serving as Secretary of State and Election Clerk to step away from the ballot counting table to answer questions from the media.
  - i. The facilitator will pretend to be a reporter, asking the Secretary of State and the election clerk the following questions. The goal of the questions is to help students understand that counting ballots is a very careful process that takes time to ensure is accurate!
    1. How is ballot counting going?
    2. When do you expect ballot counting to be complete?
    3. Why does the ballot counting process take time to complete?
    4. Do you know who has won the election yet?
  - ii. The facilitator, pretending to be a reporter, can ask students in the audience what their voting day experience was like.
- e. Step 8: Announce the winners: The poll workers will hand the final vote tallies to the student volunteering as Secretary of State to announce the results and the winner of the election.
  - i. Ask the election observers to report what they saw during the ballot counting process.
  - ii. Congratulate the winner, the student voters, and ask the “poll workers” to pass out “I voted” stickers!

- iii. Thank the Secretary of State, election clerk, poll workers, and observers.
- f. Now that the mock election is over, you may ask the students to reflect on their experience.
  - i. Option to offer a writing prompt or ask students to film a short video for social media answering a question about their experience. Example questions below:
    1. “Why is voting important?”
    2. “What happens if I don’t vote?”
    3. “Describe your plan to vote for the first time in a real election.”
  - ii. Research suggests that peer-to-peer engagement is the most effective way to increase voter participation among young voters. Encourage students to share photos and videos of their mock election experience with their peers via social media. Don’t forget to tag us by using the hashtag #MIvote2024